

PEER ARTS COLLECTIVE EXHIBITION

Authors: Sam Tomasulo¹ Molly Howes, John Gobeil

¹AIVL, Sydney, Australia

Presenter's email: samt@aivl.org.au

Background:

PACE (Peer Arts Collective Exhibition) is a peer-led arts initiative created by and for people who use drugs (PWUD) to provide creative opportunities, a safe place for artistic expression and to challenge the stigma and discrimination that face PWUD.

Description of Model of Care/Intervention:

PACE is an annual art project and exhibition book that invites artists who use drugs to contribute creative works for national publication. The inaugural 2024 edition featured 16 artists from across Australia. More than just an arts-based initiative, PACE was designed to showcase the artwork of peers through a process grounded in community care, and celebration. The project is curated by peers with lived-living experience, demonstrating that people who use drugs are not only service participants but cultural leaders and creative forces.

Effectiveness/Acceptability/Implementation:

PACE's success is rooted in the power of peer leadership and trust. Its accessible submission process and culturally safe framework created an inclusive environment where contributors felt valued and respected. Feedback from participants, readers, and peer networks has affirmed that PACE isn't just impactful, it's necessary. One of the artists from 2024 has their work being published in an international publication.

Conclusion and Next Steps:

Plans for the next PACE edition are already underway, this year we are also including a dedicated artist award co-developed with one of the 2024 contributors. PACE continues to grow as a platform for PWUD artists to showcase their work in safe spaces.

Implications for Practice or Policy:

PACE exemplifies what becomes possible when peer leadership is resourced, respected, and amplified. It is a living exhibition of our community's resilience, complexity, and brilliance which must be celebrated and acknowledged to break down barriers and challenge stigma and discrimination.